Wise-Knut

Björnstjerne Björnson

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WISE-KNUT

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BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

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BY

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From the Norwegian
by Bernard Stahl

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Just a Word

AT a time when the book-counters groan under the weight of Supernatural Studies, Fantastic Manifestations, the Mysteries of Spiritualism, Scientist and New Thought literature, etc., it may interest not only the followers of Mrs. Eddy, Dr. Sears, the late Dr. Lombroso, Professor James, Dr. Stead and others of the cult, healers and investigators, but also the public at large to become acquainted with a sane little book written by the well-known Norwegian philosopher and author Björnstjerne Björnson.

This work was published in Norway about forty years ago.

Let me ask you, gentle reader, to compare it with the voluminous publications of to-day dealing with a similar subject.

The comparison, I'm quite certain, will be a great and genuine surprise to you.

First because Björnson in a condensed, simple form describes many of the newest and most startling phenomena of to-day as exhibited in the useful life of a peasant a century or more ago.

Secondly, because it must greatly astonish you to find this modest peasant healer and seer possessed of a gift which is shown to have been even more powerful and wonderful than that of many a famous healer, seer

and "wizard" performing in costly churches in the midst of richly dressed people or in large halls.

Thirdly, because of late the interest of the world has been stirred by the telepathic communications and spiritistic phenomena transferred from another world to Mme. Eusapia Paladino the famous Italian medium.

And so many and so wonderful are the manifestations, so earnest is the belief of reputable scientists and famous authors essaying their different inquiries into the ways of mediums and disembodied spirits, that the most skeptical are forced to stop short and listen.

I myself stood still for a long

while listening intently to the startling accounts of the Paladino seances and to stories of telepathy, of healings, of phantasms and apparitions until I was compelled to take a long deep breath. And while so doing I suddenly remembered a book by Björnson entitled "Wise-Knut" that I as a boy of fifteen had read with unbounded wonder and curiosity. It is this book that I have now had the pleasure of making available to American readers, and I have tried to imitate so far as possible the sweet and simple expression of the author.

Am I mistaken in my belief, I wonder, that Björnson — unconsciously perhaps—forty years ago

touched a still new and wonderful field for examination and discovery: —that the apparent mysteries of spiritualism and spiritual manifestations are nothing more nor less than the mysteries of the human nervous system, about which we still are quite ignorant?

Perhaps this little book may help to answer the question: "What is a miracle?"

BERNARD STAHL.

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Wise-Knut

IN the seventeenth century a boy in Romsdal, Norway, went into the mountains after a load of hay. The grass which is cut from the enclosed Säterfield (outfarm) during the summer is usually stored up in a barn until midwinter when it can be easily carried home from the mountains on a sled. As the boy was loading the sleigh the whole barn suddenly fell down—the horse running away in one direction, the boy in another; and he never again came home to Romsdalen.

But a few years after this adventure he was found to be married and

to have settled down on a deserted farm called Nordgaarden, Svastum county in Gausdal State. This farm was given to him probably together with the woman who became his wife.

This couple had a daughter who became engaged to a traveler, but when the brother of the traveler came to the house he fell so desperately in love with her that he took both the bride and the farm away from his brother. Their son, Johans, was of a somewhat singular temperament and was known in his homestead as a man who could "see things." Johans married and had a son who was named Rasmus, and he in turn had married and had nine

children, one of whom was *Knut, "Wise-Knut."* And under this name he is known not only over the whole of Norway but also over a large part of Sweden.

Knut was not like other children. Far from it. He was often very sick, and suffered intensely from the falling-sickness (epilepsy) and for that reason was unable to take part in the hard farm work or in fact do anything at all. Nor could he be taught to read except by listening to the other children. But the teacher soon took a liking to this strange ailing boy, with big sparkling and strongly squinted eyes, a defect, however, which only gave an added impression of something strange and

absent. It happened quite often that Knut suddenly fell down from the school-bench and lay for a long while entirely unaware of himself and his surroundings. His schoolmates saw something quite supernatural in him.

The falling-sickness, however, became less pronounced as the boy grew up. He was confirmed (only on what he understood and had learned by heart, as he could neither write nor read) and had already hired himself out for a day-laborer as his father had just died and the family was in great need. But he couldn't stand the hard work, the fits came back, and he had soon to return home.

He was born and brought up in a poor mountain district and on one of its very poorest farms at that. His delicate health craved better nourishment but that he couldn't have. And so he stayed at home with his mother and soon made up his mind to learn to read and write by his own effort.

This undertaking was looked upon by the peasants as a form of divine worship, for all the "book-learning" they knew of was the knowledge of their Lord, His words and deeds; even the art of writing and reading was regarded by them as "a gift of grace."

Knut's mother was a sincere Christian and so was his teacher, and this

influence, as well as the boy's delicate health, made him trust in God and lean upon Him as his only support. If we add to this his early inclination to dream and talk about the supernatural and the marvelous, we find it easy to understand what a great influence the Bible with its prophets and its miracles must have had over this sensitive boy and the convincing evidence and reality it lent to his visions and dreams.

Poor lad! There he lay in his bed disabled and dreaming, oppressed by poverty, shut in by mountains and ever yearning. What wonder that he began to transform his home and all the narrowness about him by making things appear

big and beautiful in his imagination!

The very first thing he would do, he promised himself, after leaving the bed would be to help his mother with the farm work and to work *hard* trying to make the farm larger and more profitable. Oh, the farm, he was sure, would become one of the finest in the county. And in fact as soon as he was able to walk about he began eagerly to clear away stones and trees in order to cultivate new land, and he also built a new barn in his unskillful way.

His devotedness bound him for a while to his home and his work, but it could hardly be expected to last long. The very smallest chance (as soon as the wings were grown suf-

ficiently) could drive him to flight into the world of mysticism and dreams.

Although well informed as he was on religious matters he was once prevailed upon to try a superstitious remedy for his ailment. The remedy consisted of three drops of blood taken from three crippled persons, and this was to be eaten on a piece of bread. He should further take the heart out of a snake (in the spring before the call of the cuckoo), and this he should roast and eat. He also received an amulet to be worn about the neck.

To do such things, he believed, was to come in contact with supernatural power and soon this thought

began to burn him and he had no more peace.

"Hadn't the Lord forbidden all witchcraft?"

"Who was *Knut* that he dared to put his trust in any other power than that of God?"

"What would become of him who had forgotten his God; yes, betrayed Him?"

Every idle word and thought since his early childhood now came marching along placing its heavy weight on his racked heart. His feeble health could not long endure the strain of the severe fight within him and he was often tempted to end his miserable life,—a life already lost. Whenever he caught sight of

a knife he was tempted to use it against himself. At last he decided to go to church (miles and miles away) kneel down at the communion table, partake of the Lord's supper, and receive forgiveness.

There was as a rule no service held at the Svastum church during the winter, but notice had been sent out that there would be a service with communion six weeks after Christmas, and to this Knut wished to go. But three days before the service was to take place he became so violently ill that he had to keep in bed for weeks.

During this sickness he was a defenceless prey to perpetual intoxications of the senses. After days of

fainting spells he became at last calmer and then he could hear harps playing in the air (compare Ibsen's "The Masterbuilder" Hilde's repeated talk about harps playing in the air) and the singing of hymns. Later he heard music played on violins and clarinets, sweeping along the floor as though it came up from the earth itself, accompanied by a choir of heavenly voices. Finally the music rose up towards the skies—and faded into silence.

Later on he was able to apprehend and understand a few words of the hymns. The form was very simple and the object was to tell him that he should throw away all witchcraft, and trust in the medicament of his

God which was "the flesh and blood of our Lord." The hymn ended with these lines,

"If sickness, dread and pain thou fear
Then sin from heart and soul first tear."

It is to be noted that all the hymns he then and later "heard" were sung in the general written language of the country, while Knut himself to his death spoke the dialect of the parish only, a dialect which differed a good deal from the common language.

Allow me—before I go farther into the life of this strange creature who in his time called forth so many

different opinions and so much scorn —to mention that I go by a book written in a language made up from the peasant's dialect, a sort of ancient remains from the old Northern language. The author of this book was born of peasants but he was a man of classical education. His name was Johannes Skar and he was brought up so to speak on the strange stories related of Wise-Knut. He traveled over a good deal of the country in order to search for evidence and make personal investigations, and it is safe to say that he never gave up or contented himself until he had found those who had been in personal contact with the famous seer.

Johannes Skar very often spoke with Knut himself. He lived here at Svastum in Gausdal—only a few miles from my own estate—and many of the stories here related I've heard myself, some from the very first source and some more from the second or third, and from my very childhood indeed I've been told stories similar to those related by Johannes Skar without being able to enter into any investigations. But this has been done by Johannes Skar and of his ability, good intention, and love for truth there is not the slightest doubt. Nor is there any person living in Gausdal *who denies that Knut was an honest man.*

Knut died in his 89th year, and re-

ceived until his last days all who came to him; and one can freely say that he was known personally by every single soul throughout the whole State.

It is also safe to say that from the very oldest, who had known him from childhood, to the grown-up men of independence and authority, who, unlike the old ones, were not likely to be influenced by the strong impression of his first appearances among them or by the cry of indignation his ill treatment aroused, there exists only one opinion as to his honesty and veracity.

However, the tempest has quieted down and there is now silence in the judgment of this strange man though

not perhaps in arguing about the reason why he, more than others, should have been able to see, hear and do such marvelous things. I ought perhaps to add that the office-bearers, the clergy, the judges and others who met him during the last yeras of his life were as perfectly convinced of his honesty as all the rest. By so saying, however, I don't wish it to be understood that he was never the victim of self-delusion, a fact anyone can easily find out for himself.

But there is much that is absolutely free from any sort of self-delusion, much that is mixed up with it—but at any rate just as wonderful, just as unaccountable.

Unaccountable?—Yes, there exist of course many different explanations, and I also have mine at hand, but will keep them back as my only wish is to display *absolutely trustworthy material* for those who wish to enter upon a research that so far has been decidedly incomplete.

So now we are ready to go back to Knut.

From the moment he made up his mind to throw the amulet away the falling-sickness departed from him and he felt strong and well for a long time. Later he was often reminded of this painful time by certain indistinct music, (war-music, as he called it) delicate in its instrumental composition but always ending in hymns

—formal, tiresome warnings expressed in dry defective book-language. This music usually commenced when he was in great want, and ended when he had done what the singing commanded—cried out his want to God. "He clinched his teeth together and listened as long as he could hear the song," he said, "because he wasn't to allow his own thoughts to disturb him so long as the song lasted."

People thought he suffered from thick blood and suggested bleeding as an unfailing remedy for such an ailment. He was willing to "bleed" but on the way to the doctor the singing began and the song told him not

to go, and so he was compelled to return.

"And the singing continued until a scale fell from my eyes and I knew instantly that it was my sin, not my blood, that created all the disturbances within and that prayer and prayer alone could save me."

Later in the spring he was able to leave his bed and enjoy the bright morning-sun from the little stoop of his hut. The gruesome fight within was not at an end but it had been somewhat subdued and he felt more at peace.

There he could sit receiving orders—as it seemed to him—to pick up a hymn-book, find out the hymn and take part in the singing verse

by verse while the invisible choir were singing most heavenly above him. It was especially the fine strong hymns which were sung to him while he in his book followed up every word with his finger.

When well again "he was told" to go and wake up his brethren from sin. He was much embarrassed by this command as he feared their talk and ridicule about his "thick blood." But he was told to endure their treatment until he should have been to the Lord's table. From then on it should be better with him.

And now something new came to him. It happened that he could sit in his hut and "hear" what was just talked about far away, yes, even in

foreign countries, and when the rumour or the mail at length reached the parish the report he had given of the news was found to be correct in every detail. And it happened when a person had lost himself in the mountains that he told the exact spot where that person strayed and he also repeatedly told where lost cattle were to be found.

On a farm where no drinkable water was to be had, he told where to dig for it, and water in abundance was immediately found. And each and every one of these things occured again and again.

I shall a little later return more authoritatively to this matter which I've memtioned here only in passing.

One can easily understand the tremendous impression of all this on the neighboring peasants. And when the reports, often exaggerated, flew over the mountains, people came singly or in companies from every corner of the country to see him and consult him. God had raised a prophet among them!

The attack on Christianity during the last century had made an impression on the cultivated classes in Norway and their doubts by and by had reached downward to the common people. The parson of the parish, a man who eagerly sought to raise and enlighten his flock, had published a book that he advised all young people to use instead of

Luther's catechism, and in this he taught *morality* instead of *faith*. In general the peasantry had begun to look on Christianity with a certain coolness, except those, of course, who were stirred up by the call of repentance of the famous peasant-preacher Hans Nielson Hauge. However, in spite of all teaching, preaching and stirring up, the old faith soon showed itself to have the stronger grasp on the people. The old Christian faith was always burning beneath it all and might flare up at any moment.

When it became known that Knut would attend church the seventh of June (that day another service with communion was to be held at Svas-

tum church) and that Knut that day from what had been told would drop to the church floor and remain there for two hours, people streamed to the church afar.

Svastum is a long monotonous dale whose mountain-ridges on both sides are not especially high, but give an impression of gloomy heaviness nevertheless, because of the narrowness of the dale. The farms checkered with fields seem to hang upon the mountain-sides and only now and then an opening is found for a level lawn. On such a lawn stands Svastum church, a little low wooden chapel. The river, white-green and ill-tempered, hastily passes by. A

few cultivated patches, wrung from the woods, light up the slopes.

The inhabitants of this dale do not possess the usual liveliness of mountain-people, but are—like the people of the Gudbrandsdale—as a whole, quiet and gloomy. They have no national songs, nor special poetry. The people living at Svastum have as a rule long bony faces, dark hair and blue eyes with a serious and searching look. Their manners are cautious or, better still, indicate self-command. And this peculiarity, it shall be said to the honor of Gudbrandsdale, is far more prominent in this State than in any other State or parish of Norway. That's why they conduct themselves so well—the men

often with striking dignity and the women with charming modesty. But gloomy they are for their life is depressing, shut in as they are like the surrounding valley itself.

This day, however, it was otherwise. Excitement had entered into this formal mass. A bomb had suddenly been thrown into their midst; they were to-day to meet with the "miracle-boy," the new messenger, the new prophet sent down from God into their own district. Many were those who walked miles to meet him on his way, others waited at the church for his arrival, scattered in clusters everywhere about the lawn over which brooded the mountains.

The men folks wore breeches and

high boots. Their coats had broad coat-laps and green cuffs somewhat like the uniforms worn a hundred years earlier by the Eugenes and Marlborough's soldiers and also by their forefathers who had fought as Danish-Norwegian auxiliaries.

The womenfolks were dressed in black, tight-fitting gowns and had large white skauts (caps) on their heads which overhung their faces and almost hid them. From a distance it looked as though white birds were sitting in clusters around the lawn—because the sexes kept apart at the services just as they do to-day.

And there Knut came with a great following. He was at this time

about twenty-one years old, large-limbed and tall, but weak about the joints.

He came rapidly and somewhat haltingly with the whole flock at his heels. He was bare-headed, because as he said, "it had been whispered into his ear" that he should take his cap off, and from that moment he never put it on again as he went into fits and cramps if he did so. He had unusually long hair, raven-black and coarse, standing in a regular curve up over his broad forehead and hanging down the shoulders like flapping wings. His visage was big and extremely expressive, the mouth half open, the nose long and straight, brows strong

and heavy and eyes with unusually large and sparkling pupils. The eyes themselves saw crookedly and this added something indescribable to his look. The cast reminded the on-looker of that secret voice which mastered his will and powers.

His whole appearance and the procession in which he came created both surprise and respect.

The doors and windows were all open and the clergyman stood in the sacristy awaiting anxiously the moment that the great mass of people would quiet down so that he could commence the service.

Knut made directly for the sacristy, greeted the parson and seating himself on the parson's

bench he said, "I'm the person the whole world makes fun of because I'm compelled to tell things which are whispered into my ear."

The clergyman thought the man crazy and treated him accordingly with calmness and patience.

Knut sang "with bad execution" (says the clergyman in his report) "a whole lot of those hymns he had heard in the air."

Those hymns still exist.

They teach conversion in the way and spirit of the Old Testament, except that they threaten no infernal torment.

"If the people won't listen to the command of God," was the threat, "pestilence and bloody war will

come." (It is to be noted that this took place only four years after a long-lasting war and a following famine.) But the threat was only incidental. Even the very first hymn was more alluring than threatening, describing as it did all the wonderful things the soul would receive from the hand of God, and the severe inducement to aim for those things only was very forcibly expressed in all the hymns. And so hymn after hymn was sung while the immense gathering pressed forward against the entrance of the church in the hope of catching a glimpse of him. And it was such a beautiful day in June, and such peace all about, such blessed stillness! The

parson could do nothing, not even move. In Knut's second hymn were mentioned the vices and all the different abuses committed in the parish, also those of the church; but the form was always mild. The third complained of the abolishing of some of the catholic holidays. The Lord wasn't worshipped enough.

At last the service was commenced, and the people again rushed forward, but the church was already packed. Scores of people were standing in throngs in the doorway and in front of the open windows.

Soon it was reported that Knut was trembling violently because a new and worthless hymn-book had been used. The singing ceased, and

the congregation were simply compelled to sing from the old book. (It was clear that this silent command had made deep impression, for the old hymn-book was dearly loved). In the mean-while Knut had become so fatigued that two of his brothers had to lead him forward to receive his remission of sins. He was fully unaware of himself when he was again returned to his seat. The whole congregation was strongly affected by this sight, and the service had once more to be stopped. When the minister at last ordered him to be taken out of the church, Knut most touchingly besought the people to allow him to lie there in the temple of God. But at last he

had to be carried out of the church and laid on the lawn. Then he was attacked by a cramp so terribly severe that he was repeatedly thrown sprawling up in the air while between the attacks, in the most appealing way, he besought the people not to touch him. And they began to sing and pray with him. There were women who turned away weeping; his suffering and goodness affected them too much. At length the minister came out of the church and took part in the singing and afterward he tried to explain the situation and to talk the people into peace and calmness. He told them the best he could that Knut was in the same condition that they were

themselves when they were dreaming.

Knut remained at a farm near the church till the following Tuesday when he "received a messsage" to take the sexton, his old teacher, along with him to the church, to open the door and ring the bells for him. He further received a message to go the direct way facing the church all the while — crossing fences, rocks, heaped up stones, ditches and I don't know what. A woman who saw him pass by said, "I noticed a streak of light above him and along the road he followed."

In the church he remained for hours and when he at last was brought out he began to sing on an

endless "receipt" that he had "heard" while in church, and which on "command received" was written up and sent to the Parliament at Christiania. It was all in all a sober memorandum or note of school, church and other textbooks he deemed necessary, besides some urgent warnings advocating a better and cleaner mode of living, together with a request to appoint more holidays. If these requests were not complied with "pestilence and bloody war would come."

From that day his life was divided between two things. First the proclaiming of the Word accompanied by all the personal devotion he could render, all the kindness he

was able to do, all the sacrifices he could make. On the other hand, the bitter persecution of him for this by the office-holders of the country, especially the clergy.

It was at that time prohibited by the law of the country to advance any other meanings out of the Word of God than those which were accepted and authorized by the theological faculty at Christiana. They had just succeeded in putting another dreamer (Hans Nielsen Hauge) and some of his most ardent disciples in jail, (where many of them had to remain for years) and were determined to be on their guard against any new prophet.

But in spite of all this, "Knut

received his message" to go out to a far-away district and preach to the people and gladly and fearlessly he obeyed. However, he was quickly seized upon by the maintainers of the law, and by order of the sheriff was to be transported back to his homestead. But Knut got cramps and became lame so the transporting had to be postponed. Some time later he was seized upon again, and again he became ill and this time so severely that by the least touch of his captors he was thrown up in the air and again tossed down at the feet of his pursuers as though he was handled by some strong invisible power. However, they were strong in numbers now and he was seized by force

and carried away step by step. Although he suffered fearful pains from the touch of their hands, they wouldn't let go, and so he was carried off moaning and entreating, followed by a great crowd of men and women.

Among those who followed was a giant of a fellow, Imort Nerlid by name, who during the reviews had shown himself to be the strongest man of his State to say the least. This giant, who loved Knut with the devotedness of a child, begged to be allowed to set Knut free. But the humble law-abiding Knut wouldn't allow this.

As they went on, it became worse and worse with him, and his pursu-

ers, frightened at last by the uncanny sight, sent for a horse and sleigh. Barely placed on it he fell again into a trance and (such is the unanimous testimony of all the many people who were present) was hurled out of the sleigh and thrown with weird force far away from the road, and this repeated itself over and over again.

Once he was thrown headlong into a river while he was driven alongside it. They had at last to leave him alone, and in spite of his extreme fatigue he addressed the same evening a great gathering of people who had streamed together from everywhere to hear him. The same night he sang among other things a

most beautiful hymn, and he certainly must have made a profound impression, for one who was present learned the song by heart only by hearing Knut sing it.

This man could recite it half a hundred years after to that one who has gathered together these few pages from Knut's life.

The military force had in the meantime been notified, and seven soldiers under command of a captain and two lieutenants of the army (they thought this great fun I believe) marched to the place where Knut gave his lecture. As Knut was found to be still in the midst of his talk a man was put on look-out to report to the "military force" who

in the meantime spent the time in dancing and card-playing at a neighbouring house. These amusements attracted them so strongly, however, that they forgot all about Knut until midnight. Then they forced their entrance into Knut's room, a room so narrow and low that the guns scratched the ceiling.

Knut begged them to leave him alone. The giant, his devoted friend, who also had crawled into the room to be in Knut's presence, thought the best way to fix matters up would be to throw the whole "military force" headlong out of the house, but Knut succeeded, though with difficulty, in calming him and the other good people present, who

were only too willing to lend the giant a hand if need should be.

As soon as the soldiers put their hands on him he began to tremble, but he was carried down and forcibly bound to the sleigh with strong ropes. He soon fell into his spasms. The ropes broke like silk thread and he was thrown violently off the sleigh in the same way as formerly related. They roped him again, but again he was thrown off most violently. A strong, powerful man then forced him down in the sleigh while the others roped him. "Then," it is told, "Knut's moans were unspeakably heart-rending."

This ill-treatment was continued for miles and miles, and whenever he

was handed over to a fresh set of men, he sang his farewell to those who left, praised God and prayed for their souls.

But no sooner was he—in this terrible way—brought to his own homestead than the giant, Imort Nerlid and another big fellow came to him sent out from the people at large, to induce him to return to Fron State immediately. The whole people, so to speak, would stand up for him in one strong body and watch and guard him.

Poor Knut! He was greatly frightened at the mere thought of taking the long journey and of the task ahead of him, but he was "com-

manded to follow them" and so he went gladly.

The Sunday after his arrival was "a service Sunday" and guarded by a great mass of people he went to church.

The minister and those who had ill-treated Knut were looked upon and judged very harshly by the people and were therefore much frightened. The man, who in such a brutal way had forced Knut down into the sleigh while he was roped, was also at the church and so roughly was he handled by the giant that only a lucky circumstance saved him from being killed. The manner of the people was such indeed that it was decided to leave Knut alone.

The inhabitants of Fron Sate were eager to keep Knut in their midst forever, and for that reason the giant, Imort Nerlid, almost compelled Knut to purchase the half of his farm at Fron—at a dead bargain, of course. Later when Imort moved away Knut sold his part of the farm for a very high price which was invested in an annual allowance for life.

He always had been longing for the place where he had suffered and played as a child and now it seemed as though his wish would be fulfilled, but alas! he was accused of giving medical advice although it was authoritatively stated without a single doubt that he never in his

whole life had accepted so much as one single penny for his aid nor had his aid hurt anybody—quite the contrary. Moreover, he was at the same time accused of unlawful religious teaching. (This also was found false.) He was nevertheless sentenced to pay big fines and heavy costs, and in order to be able to comply with this heart-rending unjust demand he had to give up his annual allowance for many years. But he never complained.

He went home to Svastum, where he was born, and lived there in a little cabin alone on the poorest food.

After his homecoming he was at first seen much abroad—later less frequently. He made his living by

day-labouring until the day came at last when he could receive the benefit of his allowance. However, he was always cheerful and had unfailing consolation for those who sought him.

It is not my object, however, to describe much more of Knut's exterior life, but if it could be determined exactly how many he was able to help in his long life, bodily as well as mentally—the number would be surprisingly large. And could it be told how many he had taken fatherly by the hand and led from a thoughtless life into one of uprightness and sincerity that number would indeed reach an amazingly high figure. Or if one could count all the death

beds by which he mildly sat and offered consolation! Truly he was a blessing not only to people within his reach but to many a sick and unhappy man and woman living far away in other lands.

He was pursued not only by the office holders of the country but also for a long time by the so-called "Holies," those who had been religiously aroused by Hans Nielsen Hauge and his ardent desciples. We have in our possession a letter from Hauge addressed to Knut which appears to be *a gross* injustice from the first line to the very last. The clergy never went so far as to accuse Knut of shameless fraud and recklessness but such were the tactics

of Hauge and his followers and they succeeded actually at last in bringing Knut—if not precisely into ill-fame—then at last in causing him to be misunderstood. Knut didn't go much about during that period, so they had rather an easy task of it. He, however, never complained or defended himself. He was really too good, too mild—in short—entirely too big-hearted to complain about anyone or anything. And I dare say that it was just this beautiful and wonderful mildness that made them hate him. Knut was besides more of a *scald* than any of them, hence his keen understanding of human nature and human ways, and his

cheerful, childlike disposition and liveliness.

The supernatural power—which so many attributed to him—was looked upon as a profanation by the "Holy ones" and his teaching as heterodoxy. When he taught that "what God wishes to be done He is able to do without any help from outsiders," and "that it was of no use to stand against His command," and further "that the people had no will of their own," etc., he was looked upon by those "holies" as a heretic. Knut, however, was as innocent as a child and never thought of supplanting their faith or creating any new religious party of his own

or establishing any other kind of following whatsoever.

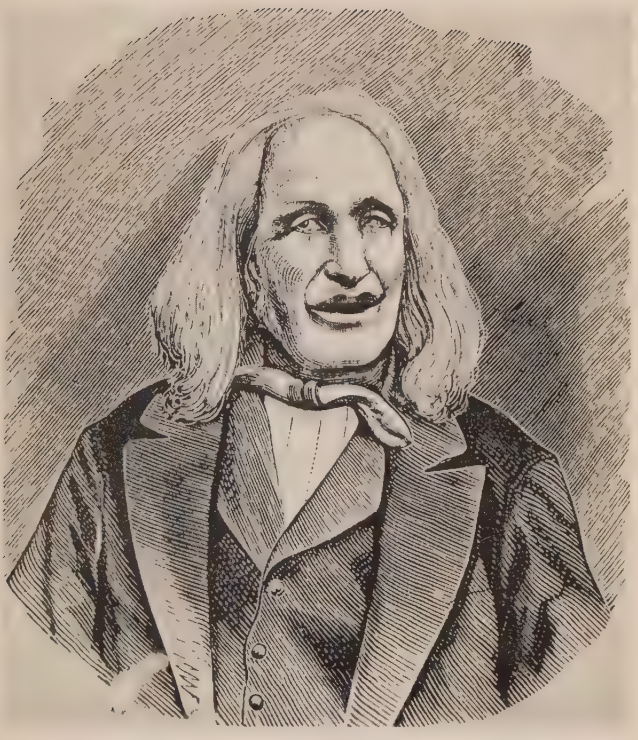
The office-holders pursued him, the "Holy" scorned him, and those who had no faith at all scorned him still more. But a soft word, a beautiful song, a little sunshine, a rare formation of the skies or a new tone in the landscape, the chirping of birds, the voices of children, the whistling of the merry toiler—and he was again just as mild, just as cheerful. A rare depth of understanding supplied his life with reflections that gave him the spirit of inquiry and the love of nature.

His gift as orator was the gift of the improvisor or rather the gift of the spiritual talker. Even to men-

tion such a thing as preparation would have been quite out of the question. The only preparation, if we may call it so, was the influence that was created by the auditors themselves, their willingness to hear, their eagerness to see him. If they came loaded with suspicions and ill-feeling against him—and such was often the case, then he became frightened and even fell into such violent trembling that he couldn't utter a single word. At one meeting, for instance, he commenced by saying, "The Godless," this he repeated several times, the rest dying away from his lips. People climbed chairs and benches to look at him "because when the trembling seized

him," it was told, "he was still more frightful to look at." The benches and chairs they had climbed upon broke down and laughter and flippant remarks reached his ears. He felt it "as a punishment of God" to stand there among them. He could not proceed and they had to leave him.

But it wasn't always so. Once, for instance, it happened that he "felt" that somebody in the big audience was scorning him and swearing. He stopped short at once, pointed out the guilty parties and ordered the offenders to leave the hall immediately. The offenders were thunderstruck. They were quite certain that not even the nearest



WISE-KNUT

AS OLD MAN

bystanders, not to mention Knut, could possibly have heard their indecent remarks, and this made a great impression upon them. At this meeting, it was reported, Knut was granted oratorical and vocal power as seldom before or since in his whole life.

In his every-day speech and plain conversation he was extremely fascinating, both imaginative and profound and always lovable.

The impression he made, especially at his first appearance as a youth of twenty-one, must have been great indeed. This is clearly shown during the severe persecution by the faithfulness of his friends as well as by the following great uprising; still

further by each individual self-sacrifice.

But others—those who didn't entertain any kind of friendly feelings towards him—were enraptured to such a degree that they saw visions and told of lightning in the air above him as he went about.

During one of his meetings when he sat by the window reading from the Bible in the twilight, "a rainbow reaching from one shoulder to the other" was plainly noticed by the gathering. And it is further related "that angels whispered to him," and those angels were often visible to the people. Others told of "two white birds sitting on his right shoulder."

He once held a meeting at Trätte-

parsonage. Many people came together from afar and after the meeting some of them slept in the room with Knut. During the night they were awakened by hearing him talk in sleep, giving a continuation of his speech of the preceding evening. At last he awoke and noticed in the light summer night the other guests sitting fully awake and upright in their beds and listening. His pillow was wet with tears. One can easily understand that such a *deep* emotional nature, such a vivid imagination as his, must necessarily move them. And one cannot easily overlook what a great effect his personal appearance must have added to all this. Think of his big, marked, ex-

pressive face, his shining eyes and his tremendous raven-black hair floating about his shoulders like a royal mantle.

However, all this and more wouldn't have been sufficient to create much enthusiasm, if the people hadn't been absolutely convinced *that this strange creature could heal people by the mere imposition of hands and furthermore could positively tell where lost things were to be found and still further could tell what people living far away were doing or talking about.*

And here we shall turn a new page, looking only into that for the sake of which I have taken up the

treatment of the subject of *"Wise-Knut."*

Let it be remembered that what here is produced is undisputed.

He believed that his strange abilities were given him as a gift from God, that God in every case "used him" as his tool. He said, "The prophets have had it like myself." When he couldn't touch gold, silver or copper without having spasms he explained it as a dispensation of God.

I'll copy here what a man as a witness for the court of Law deposed as to the effect the mere touch of copper had on Knut.

"I placed," said the man, "two copper-coins on his palm and immediately a spasm in his arm was

noticeable. Knut writhed and made faces from pain, insisting that a sinew in his arm had sprung. And actually when I investigated I found the sinew to be quite hard, and in the palm a bump was to be seen. As soon as the coins were removed, and Knut had rubbed the hand, the arm was in its natural state again."

Once it happened that Knut as he entered a farmhouse, Stamme by name, found Jens, the farmer, in eager search for a lost silver coin.

"Good boy!" the farmer exclaimed as he saw Knut enter, "Here is some work for you to do."

"Very well, sir," answered Knut, smilingly, "but then I must have another silver piece to search with."

He got another piece which he placed between his two fingers. Immediately the arm began to tremble violently and he was pulled toward a corner in the room, there the fingers were drawn down to a crack in the floor where the coin was found.

Niels Huseby, a well known farmer from Hedemarkens county, was to have a well on his farm and had brought Knut to show them where to dig it.

On their way they rested themselves at a place called Jevanorsbakken at Furnä's valley. The place was reached in the middle of the night so the people were all fast asleep, but they hurriedly left their warm beds and made a fire on the

hearth. They had no candles at hand, however, and left it to the brisk fire to light up the room. It was a cold night, so Niels took his flask out of his pocket and offered Knut a dram. The darkness of the room prevented Knut's noticing that the brandy was offered him in a silver-cup. And thus runs Niel's own account of this incident.

"Knut began to cry out as though he had burned himself and asked me for heaven's sake to help him. And," says Niels further in his narrative, "the silver-cup had literally grown fast to Knut's face, and I had to use such force in delivering him that I actually feared that his whole

mouth would come out with the cup."

As Knut once walked over a field at Steine, Gausdal county, he suddenly stood stock still and cried out, "There is something both red and white underneath here!" The men dug and on the very spot a lump of silver was discovered. As the head-chemist at the university of Christiana was examining the discovery, he said, "If it hadn't been for the reliability of the man who told it, I should have called it a fraud."

Neither could he stand to be handled by anybody, as the slightest touch caused him pain. However, he could bear the touch of a friendly

handshake. Nor could he wear any head-covering.

At the court of law once the judge put a hat on Knut's head and commanded him to keep it on. A moment later Knut fell to the floor in a dreadful fit, and the judge was much frightened.

It sometimes happened that if Knut had made up his mind to follow a certain road in a certain direction that his right foot suddenly refused to go any farther, simply compelling Knut to turn in the direction the foot wished him to go.

I put down all this exactly as he felt it and saw it and as the people understood it, and related it, keeping my own opinion in reserve.

1. What Knut did in his search for water.

He went to a place where it was most likely that water was to be found and there he began his search by placing the back of his hand on the ground, mowing it slowly until it began to pull on his fingers and there, underneath, was the water.

(It was for a long while Knut's way of earning a livelihood to find water and dig wells for people. There are scores of farms in the eastern counties which in this way have obtained better drinking-water than they ever had before, or obtained it from nearer and more convenient places, or owe it entirely to

Knut that they have any water on their farms at all. Before his day they had to fetch it from afar.)

He tells himself that he also learned to find water by carrying a twig firmly in his hand. When the twig approached a water-vein it would bend up to his chest. It had to be a birch-twig or better still the twig of a wild-cherry tree.

I'm fully aware that there are other people who are able to find water in the same way.

2. *How Knut cured sickness and healed by imposition.*

When his hand touched the diseased place it literally grew fast to

the spot so to speak, and by the help of the other hand only he was able to rub it about, and in this way he worked over the diseased body, "grinding his teeth and foaming at the mouth;" he seemed to suffer intense pain.

In spite of all this agony he never refused his help and he never accepted payment.

There exists much evidence that he also gave medicine to his patients or sent them directly to a physician, or told them frankly that he couldn't help them. He showed in these cases the same sympathy, since he lived entirely for others.

Anders Rolliden narrates the following occurrence:

"One day Knut and I were standing on the lawn cutting branches off some trees when a woman came along with two boys. One of the boys had sore eyes. Knut placed his hand on the boys eyes, and the eyes were healed while we stood looking on. I noticed that his hand vibrated in a strange way while it lay on the boy's eyes."

Knut in his old age related himself the following occurrence to Johannes Skar:

"At Vedum farm was a girl who had ugly blains on her eyes that I was fortunate enough to heal at once only by touching them with my finger-tips. 'Oh, dear, oh dear!' exclaimed the girl, 'I can see the bright

daylight!' I couldn't help weeping for seeing her joy," said Knut joyfully.

It is positively attested that by imposition of hands he healed people of palsy and rheumatism, but how many other different diseases he was able to cure in this way it is hard to tell. It is safe to say that as a rule, he must have been extremely successful in his cures, since one meets people from many different places who owe their health to him. People came to him in scores from Holsten in the South and from Russia in the East and he was able to tell at a glance whether he could cure them or not.

But even if it was an ailment he

could cure at once by imposition of hands he would do it on one condition only:

On their blind faith and trust in God, and their belief that it was God that helped them through him. There could be no compromise on this point and there was no possibility of deceiving him. He knew instantly when a person didnt believe in God—and withdrew.

Here is one of the many stories still in existence put down directly from its relation by the person concerned. This story leads us at the same time into the field in which Knut created his greatest sensation.

"A little girl from Christiana became lame and was severely attacked

by rheumatism in one of her arms.

For more than ten years this little girl had dragged herself along with the help of two crutches and no physician could relieve her. When the news of Knut's sojourn at Helgöen Mjösen was brought to the girl's family, they immediately sent a message to the farmer at Helgöen to keep Knut and that the girl should be sent off at once. She was at that time about sixteen years old and was accompanied by an older sister. The invalid arrived and had to be entirely undressed, yes, even the hairpins in her hair, the rings on her fingers and the drops in her ears were removed. When during the gliding process with his hand, he touched the

diseased spot he gave out a terrible cry. After an hour's work he told the girl to rise and stand up, and she did so without any support at all. She had not done so since she was five years old. He told her, however, to use the crutches for another year, but she disobeyed and threw them away on her way homeward two days after she had left Knut. This rashness on her part had no other ill effect than that one of her feet always was more delicate than the other, a defect hardly worth mentioning.

3. At last we have reached that for which Knut was best known and for which he was most scorned.

Let us commence this section by continuing the story told above. The older sister wished to give Knut something, although she was well aware of the fact that Knut never received payment. She had therefore secretly brought with her from Christiana some coffee, sugar, a plaid, material for a waistcoat and a few other things she thought a lonely simple peasant would appreciate. All these things she wrapped carefully up in a bundle and (this was the most profound secret of it all)

securely hidden in the middle of the bundle she had placed a sum of money about equal to five dollars. The cure was so entirely successful that she thought her present would be too small without this addition. Knut smiled when she offered him the bundle.

"Oh—no, no!" he said without touching the bundle, "take three of the five dollars back but if you will lend me the two for my travels until I reach home I shall be thankful to you."

(He later sent the girl a present in compensation for the loan.)

The girl's astonishment can be more easily imagined than described. When she spoke to Knut about a

sickness her mother suffered from, he told her that there was nothing to be done for it.

"But she suffers great pain in one of her feet," he added.

"Oh, no, no indeed!" exclaimed the girl.

"Yes, she does," insisted the seer, "she suffers much pain in one of her big toes." Then he went out into a field and returned with three striped straws which he asked her to take home to her mother. She was to bind the straws about the bad toe, one straw each week. It was eighty-four English miles from Helgöen to Christiania and there was no railroad or telegraph. When the girls at length reached home and the older

daughter would have thrown herself into her mother's arms she was warned off. Her mother was an invalid. The girl stood spellbound, speechless from sorrow and amazement.

Knut had told the truth. Her mother suffered intense pain from an evil disease that had commenced in one of her big toes but had advanced rapidly so that now a black streak was to be seen extending from the toe to the knee. The straws, however, cured her in less than three weeks. (Imparted by the younger sister.)

One day Knut was sent for by a woman who suffered from a most dangerous illness. She gave the

messenger (a servant girl) some wool to take as a present to Knut. But on the way the idea took hold of the girl that there was altogether too much wool in that bundle and that she very well could hide some of it in the wood for her own benefit.

Knut was very merry when the girl entered with her bundle. Her mistress, however, couldn't be helped, and he told her to carry the bundle back again, "but," he added, "be sure not to forget to replace what you have taken out and hidden away underneath a birchroot in the woods." The girl was evidently "cured."

Once a cottager at Biri, six Norwegian miles from Knut's place

(forty-two English miles), suddenly vanished from the valley. His wife, who was the last one who had spoken to him (they had as usual been quarreling) became frightened and sixty men began a search for him. All in vain! One of the party, a former school teacher but now a wealthy farmer, sent a man to Knut to ask his advice in the matter. Out of all the men present he selected one of his cottagers, Ole Tollessen, as the right messenger to send to Knut, "because," he explained, "Ole is sure to tell the truth when he comes back."

Knut didn't question Ole about the locality, scenery or any other matter. Ole, however, told the seer that the

last person who had seen and talked with the lost cottager was his wife.

"Yes," answered Knut, with a roguish smile, "and they didn't part on too friendly terms either."

"Is the man alive?" asked Ole, "and has he, as so many think, run away from his wife?"

"He has comitted suicide," was Knut's sad but firm reply.

"How did he do it?" Ole wished to know.

"He hangs—he hangs in a northwestly direction from the house," the seer answered.

"No sir, not he," Ole replied with a decided shake of his head, "we have searched there too."

"I know," Knut answered, mildly,

"but you were searching about where the wife ran away from him after the quarrel. But when she turned away and ran towards the dwelling he followed her and you will find him hanging in a big fir tree quite near the house. You can easily see the fir from the lawn."

Ole returned hastily, and together with the former school teacher and the sheriff they went up to the cottager's house, and from the lawn they discerned a big fir waving its head a little above the other trees. In that fir they found the poor fellow's body—where it had been for four weeks.

Kristian Kristiansen, a young man from Troen, Fron county, the State

of Gudbrandsdalen, emigrated to America in the early spring of 1869. He had an aunt over there to whom he was going. But month after month passed and no tidings came from Kristian. His mother, overcome by fear and grief, made up her mind to see Knut about it. She had a long laborious way to travel but reached the place at last on the 6th of July at three o'clock P. M.

When Knut was asked if he could tell her whether her son Kristian had reached his place of destination or not, he became silent for a long while, and at last he said slowly, "I can't say exactly that he has."

That was all he would say, and the mother discouraged by the bad

news went heart-broken to her quarters, without asking Knut further questions.

The next morning as she was approaching his hut she saw him coming towards her — "radiant and beaming like a child."

"Yes, yes," he cried, "he has reached his place of destination all right. The boy is at his aunt's home now and looks fine. In fact," he added gleefully, "the boy is very happy and contented and has been in good health ever since he left home."

A letter dated the 12th of July confirmed this statement. The boy had at length after many adventures reached his aunt's home the 6th of July at nine o'clock P. M. One

calls to mind that mid-day is six hours later in America.

Simon Hovde, Ojer valley, had a son, called Mikkel, who, as a lad of nineteen ran away from home. His older brother Klement went to Knut to inquire about his brother's whereabouts.

On his way to Knut he hired a Karjol (single-seated carriage) and speeded away as fast as he could.

He reached his destination between three and four o'clock on a Saturday afternoon. Knut, who had been out fishing in a mountain lake, returned just in time to see Klement drive up and stop at his house.

"I could feel," said Knut, "that

somebody with a great sorrow in his heart was hurrying towards my home, so I made up my mind to leave the fishes alone and take a short cut homeward."

Klement, as might be expected was very anxious to explain his errand but he was instantly interrupted by Knut. "I know your errand quite well but please don't let us talk about it to-day."

Klement wisely yielded to the healer's wish and accepted Knut's friendly invitation to stay with him over night.

And there they slept together in that little nest of a house far away in the mountains, "Erlandshuset" by name (The Erlandshouse); Klem-

ent, however, was too worried, too uneasy at heart to sleep much.

"Your brother has just come home now," said Knut suddenly leaning on his elbow, "I notice that you're awake so I may just as well tell you the good news now as later."

Knut was very happy to report such good news and added beamingly, "Your mother is just now eagerly questioning him about where he has been, which of course is not more than can be expected of an anxious mother. And now I'll tell you where the boy has been.

"He first went to Lillehammer (quite a town in Norway.) There he met a fellow from Kjos, Ringerike, and he joined this fellow,

and together they went up to Kjos where he found work, but he didn't like the kind of work." (And Knut explained what kind of work it was.) "But what the boy disliked most of all was sleeping in the barn, and so he made up his mind to turn his nose homeward. But he won't stay long at home, oh, no, and it is best to let him have his own will because the boy is so inexperienced, you know, and must be allowed to put his abilities to a test."

All this seemed to Klement, too exact, too circumstantial to be true, and he didn't put much faith in it.

Knut, noticing Klement's distrust, smiled, and said to him as he

mounted the Karjol ready and anxious to leave for home.

"Oh, don't fear, my lad, you'll find it all to be as I've told you," and patted him comfortingly on the shoulder. The young man speeded away and when he reached the place where he had hired the Karjol the preceding day, the people came rushing towards him, eager to meet him. They knew already that Mikkel had arrived safe the same night and were therefore more than curious to learn if Knut knew it too and had told the truth. It was Sunday morning and all were at their homes.

It is impossible to describe the people's astonishment when they

learned what Knut had told Klement in the night. And the latter's surprise, amazement and joy was not less than that of the others. As soon as he reached home he was met at the door by his beloved brother, whose narrative corroborated Knut's account in every detail.

The next year Mikkel left for America.

This happened in Knut's old age. In his younger days he felt such things so strongly and so irresistibly that he was compelled to leave home frequently and go to one or another that he felt was in distress. He was often aroused at night—not by any human being—and told to dress

hurriedly and go whereto he was called.

Once in the middle of a dark stormy night he was rushed out of bed and hurried a long distance to call on a poor creature whom he found on the verge of insanity, driven into despair by jealousy and mistrust of his wife.

In the year 1828 Knut was staying at Talloug in Gausdal. During his stay here he slept one night in the room that was occupied by the son of the house and about what happened that night the son of Talloug relates as follows.

"Knut was restless the whole night, and was reading and praying unceasingly. I myself had not a

single moment's sleep and was much frightened because he was so ugly to look at. He arose with the sun and dressed himself.

" 'I've been restless and uneasy the whole night,' said Knut, 'and you haven't been able to sleep much either I suppose. I'll tell you,' he added confidentially, 'a man arrived from Saksumsdalen during the night and he is very anxious to see me. I'm glad you're getting up, too, so you can tell him to come right up here. You will find him resting on the bench in the living room.'

"But Knut and I had occupied a room on the second floor situated at the opposite end of the house. Neither he nor I could possibly have

heard the least sound of the arrival of a man or for that matter of anything going on in that part of the building.

"I found the stranger resting on the bench, and I showed him immediately up to Knut. He didn't have a chance to cross the threshold, however, nor did he open his mouth to speak either, for Knut told him at once that he couldn't help the person who had sent him and that he advised him to call a doctor as soon as possible. The man hurried out and left without having uttered a single word."

In the spring of 1835 Knut was digging a well at Huseby farm, Hedemarken.

"It will be a troublesome Easter for you this year," he suddenly said to the mistress of the house as they were eating their supper on Good Friday.

"No, no, indeed not," she answered, "we are going to stay at home by ourselves and celebrate a quiet Easter as usual."

"I'm sorry, madame, but your're mistaken; lots of people will arrive from the East to-morrow to call on me."

The next evening, Saturday night, fourteen persons from the Eastern State Odalen came to see him, having found out that he was working at Huseby.

One morning, a few days later, he

was sitting at the breakfast table, when his right arm began to tremble, stretching itself towards the Eastern mountain. The spoon fell out of his hand, and the head followed the arm in a most uncanny way.

"Those people will never let me alone," he said, "I've no peace."

And such was often the case when someone was on his way to him or even thought of calling on him. He "felt" it, and suffered great bodily and mental agony.

This, however, was not always so.

Nor did he always "receive" messages or was he "told" what to do. Many were those who sought his help in vain and had to leave as ill and troubled as they arrived.

It happened once at Dalbakken in Svastum, that he suddenly interrupted himself and exclaimed loudly, "There! At last they have found the man who lost himself up in the mountains last winter. They came to me, poor people, but in vain, but now they have found him," and he sang:

"In a cave they found the lost,
And now they pull at a dead man's corpse."

He wasn't consulted merely about sickness, lost people, etc., but also in regard to lost cattle and other misfortunes.

Very often was he sought by those who suffered from mental burdens

and needed a comforting word; for his ability to clear up a mystery, to comfort and heal a broken heart or a lost soul was simply marvellous.

I shall now relate an occurrence which took place at Skar farm in Oier, a desolate place where Knut never had been. When I say "which took place" at the Skar farm, I don't mean exactly that it literally happened at the farm, in as much as those who were sitting talking together were in a room at Aulestad in Svastum, where Knut just then stayed, consequently many miles from Skar.

There are seven English miles to one Norwegian mile.

(Johannes Skar, who is formerly

mentioned, was born and brought up on this farm.)

But when I say that it "occurred at Skar," I only mean to say that their thoughts were together at Skar, which the following story will show.

The people of Skar had made up their mind to have a well dug and sent a man to ask Knut where they should try to dig it.

(Knut didn't go round any more and it was a common custom now to ask him where they should try to dig for water.)

"I'm sent from a man in Oier county to ask you, Knut, where to search for water," began the man.

"You are, are you?" said Knut with a smile, "indeed,—but isn't it

rather strange that they send to me for water from a place where they have good water in abundance everywhere. Eh?"

"No," answered the man, "there is no water to be found at the farmhouse."

"There is plenty of water just a little distance from the house from which you come. They have already a well there; if they dig a little deeper they will have water enough."

"Yes," answered the man, "that is true, but they would like so much to have a well nearer the house, in the yard if possible."

"Well," said Knut, "there is a grove opposite the dwelling. Do you know where it is? No?—

There is a way running there?—

"No," the man answered, with a shake of his head, "the road doesn't run opposite the house, it runs below it and doesn't go through a grove either."

"No, no," answered Knut impatiently, "I don't mean the main road; this looks more like a cattle-path than a road."

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the astonished farmer, "I know what you mean now, that's true."

"Very well," continued Knut, "A birch stands in that grove, and underneath it is a spot where no grass seems to thrive. From that spot comes the jet."

The man said he knew well what birch he referred to.

"But they have water still nearer the dwelling," Knut continued. "The old people's dwelling stands southward and near that is a little house, underneath that house runs the jet."

"That must be the old people's wood-shanty," said the man.

"No, I hardly think so," answered Knut slowly, "it looks more like a booth to me."

"Then it must be the Stabur (the warehouse)."

"Exactly," said Knut, "so it is."

Knut went farther.

"Most of the water," he continued, "runs north of the farm. There is

a water-vein that runs straight through a big rock. If you walk around it you will find a somewhat muddy spot on the other side of the rock; that's the original home of the vein. There is a cornfield alongside the rock." The man nodded. "Well, haven't you noticed a muddy spot in the middle of the field and then again in the northwest corner of the field?" Knut asked.

"Yes, there was once a well there, but it ran short," answered the messenger.

"Because," replied the clairvoyant, "the jet runs a few yards farther north than where the well was. Only a little water came into the well."

The man now wished to know exactly where it would be best and easiest to dig the well.

"Oh well, just take a twig and try to find the right spot yourself," was Knut's impatient reply.

"All right," answered the farmer, in his slow way, "but we might not be able to hit the right spot after all."

"Well then," said Knut, somewhat nervously, "the jet runs up to the surface exactly where it comes out from underneath the rock—or you can hit it three or four yards north of the barn, where after all it will be best and easiest to dig."

On this spot they dug and found water easily indeed and in abun-

dance, and here stands the well to this day.

This conversation shows best how Knut gradually could work up his imagination to take possession of a place—first catching sight of some individual thing and then constantly adding more and more.

The rectory in Fron parish was pulled down and rebuilt at quite a distance from the old site, and this removal made the way for water both long and difficult. The rector, Nielsen was his name, sent word to Knut asking him if he could tell him where to find water nearer the old building. Nielsen tells about this as follows:

"There is a little sinking in the

ground," began Knut, "and right opposite is a big stone—that seems to be loose—yes, it must be quite loose. Well, there is the water to be found. There is also a green sinking in the ground nearer the new building. On that spot runs a still stronger vein, but there the well will have to be dug much deeper."

"Knut," said Nielsen further (I use his own words), "lacked entirely all local sense; but we carried out his directions and found he had told the truth in every respect."

Johannes Skar adds that the stone mentioned by Knut was to be seen yet (only a year ago), and the soil had surely enough once been dug away from it with an intent to use

the stone, but the idea had later for some reason been abandoned.

The water-jet, which was found after Knut's assignment ran about eight feet deep, exactly where he had told them.

The last two examples show forth his way of trusting to the support of those he talked with while he in his imagination took possession of a place.

But other examples show—as we have seen—how he could come to full clearness at once without any assistance whatsoever.

And again many examples reveal how he sometimes asked and asked and could see nothing and find noth-

ing and do nothing in spite of all his endeavors—as though he was entirely lost within himself—until he suddenly (perhaps in the midst of a conversation about other things) could see everything clearly, point out the places with marvellous exactness and find what people were in search of, whether human beings, cattle or water.

He erred, however, especially in his old age. Thus many people dug for silver on his repeated order, but the mines thus found were not rich enough and the people suffered great losses.

He also erred in finding lost cattle —a failure, he explained, by saying that the cattle moved about, not

standing still on the same spot awaiting the anxious searchers. But it also happened that he sometimes declared lost cattle to be dead when a few weeks later, the animals would appear on the scene fat and fine, and *vice versa.* It's very likely of course that many of those who came to him misunderstood him; I myself know of such cases; but undoubtedly he also erred.

If anyone asked Knut the reason for those failures and mistakes, he would answer, "I can't give more than I receive," or "I can't say more than what is whispered into my ear," (It was always through the "ear" he received his messages) "and," he commonly added, "I'm told that what I

say is usually true." In this he was right; what he said was indeed found to be "usually true."

If anyone asked him—and I know he was asked about this several times —"Hasn't the Tempter been out with his odious tricks trying to make you use your gifts in vain?"

"Well," he would admit, "the Tempter may have duped me, but," he added, "to my best knowledge I don't know of any case in which I've used God's gift to me for any evil purposes or for my own benefit."

And in this assertion he also was right without the slightest doubt. Indeed, if he ever felt proud of his gifts and fame it must have been when he was by himself in seclusion,

for with those few who made a friendly unselfish call upon him he preferred to speak about nature, and about God's goodness, wisdom and power.

To him the wonders and beauty of the world were the surest and most remarkable proofs of an almighty, wise and all-loving God. He very seldom spoke about himself and never unless he was forced to do so. This is confirmed by all who knew him.

In my heart of hearts I've a suspicion, however, that his failures were all results of a surpassing goodness. He would attempt to go farther than was possible in trying to help persistent people, many from

far districts and lands; and he couldn't "find things" when he was tired out or when he was suffering from harsh weather.

His excuse for not being able to help was always the same, "God is punishing me." He bore all adversity and ridicule in this simple patient way.

But he wasn't scorned by any except those who didn't know him. Those who associated with him were *all,* believers or non-believers, his reverent friends, with full trust in his honesty and in his wonderful gift.

But he didn't form any sect, party or clique, not even what is commonly called "a circle of friends." He did absolutely nothing in order to make

himself "generally recognized" as it is called. When people were kind to him (that is, treated him with friendliness and respect) he was happy and talkative. Moreover if they could understand his views and take part in his reflections on God and His conduct of the world then such an hour became a bright blessed sunspot in his life.

Many a talk with Knut has been written down and these talks all show a happy human being, a man of much thinking within his domain. His thoughts on things and people were the profound thoughts of the peasant with the peasant's prejudices and narrowly limited horizon. A friend of mine who often called on

Knut during his last days told me once that they often talked together about the spiritual life and that Knut often interrupted himself by saying, "A hymn is mentioned. Let us sing." Sometimes he said, "Wait, a number is whispered to me, but I don't know the hymn. Take the book and look the hymn up, please." The friend told me that he easily found the number thus "whispered" into Knut's ear, and that the hymns always fitted the subject just discussed, explaining things and setting their thoughts aright.

A slight touch of the supernatural such as this would be sufficient to grasp the minds of those living near by and set them wondering; but

when thousands and thousands of instances are added, what then?

If one wishes to hear all about this loving soul and about the miracles he did, let the inquirer go to the district where the wonder-worker lived and died. It will pay anyone to do this.

There was a most remarkable poetic vivacity in him that could transform every painless moment into a bit of heaven. A devoted glance, a hearty word from those present would shut away entirely out of his life all those who were not "kind."

The Bible was for a long time his only source of knowledge and it always held the leadership. All his work had to be done in the name of

the Lord and it was to God he cried for help when he was to make use of his rare gift. This he *never* neglected, he said, and he always offered his thanks to God when he was told that his cures had been successful or that he had been a comfort and help to people. His life was one long thanksgiving to God, though he endured sickness, poverty and bitter misjudgment.

I can't refrain from relating one final story that comes from a farm where Knut once stayed.

On his advice the owner dug a well in a certain place, but no water was to be found, and the men, deeply disappointed, were about to give it up.

"Because," said Knut, "you get impatient and don't dig deep enough!" And he added, "Be patient and dig on, and in a short time you will reach down to a stone and underneath that stone is the water."

And so it was.

But when shall *we* be able to dig down to that *big stone* that conceals the true understanding of such a gift as his?

When will that spring bubble up that shall slake our thirst for knowledge of the divine?

Every single occurrence, rightly seen and truthfully told is a piece uncovered on the way to the spring hidden by the big stone. And this is my reason for putting the life of

Knut down and for giving it to a larger public.

I'm extremely sorry for not having done so while he still was living, but I wasn't *acquainted* at that time in those districts where he lived and journeyed, but on the other hand only too well at home in the circles where he was scorned.

He lived to be eighty-nine years old and kept his faculties and soundness of mind to the very last minute. He didn't go abroad much in his last years but kept within the walls of his dwelling, except for an occasional call on his nearest neighbors.

Those who wanted him had to find their way up to his hut.

He never failed to take part in the

Lord's Supper when it was possible to do so, and to the end of his life prayer was the breath of life to his soul.

His death was quiet. He lay feeling his pulse and asked, "Is it day or night?" several times.

The bounds were not clear to him —as they run together when we stare too long at a riddle like the one we are facing here.

He slept away.

THE END.

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